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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
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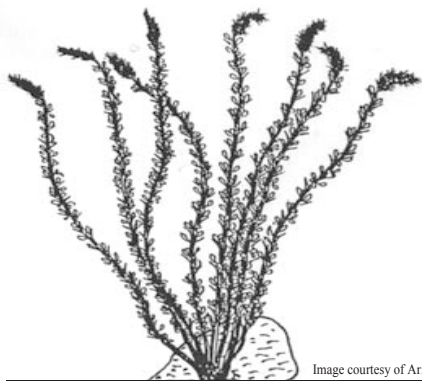
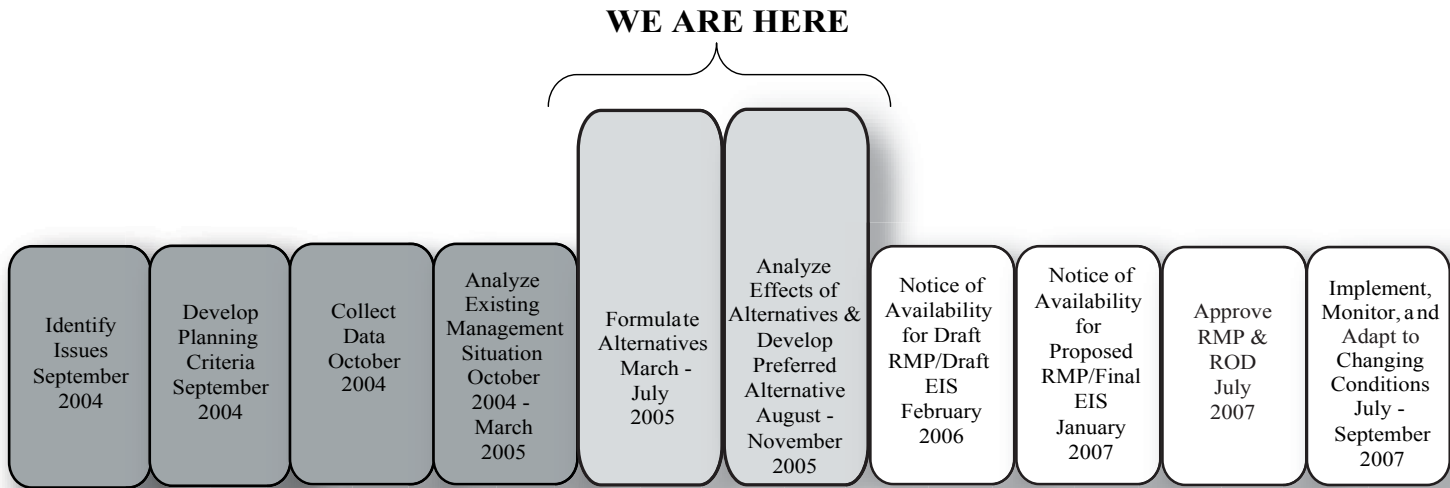


Image courtesy of Arizona Cactus, Bisbee, AZ

Yuma Field Office  
Resource Management Plan and  
Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS)

BLM Planning Process and Proposed RMP Schedule



For more Information on the RMP/EIS Process:

Updated information on the RMP/EIS process will be posted on the BLM Arizona State Office Internet site as it becomes available. The Internet address is [www.az.blm.gov](http://www.az.blm.gov) (under "What We Do", click "Land Use Planning").

If you have other questions or would like more specific information, please contact:

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# ARIZONA Planning Bulletin

Bureau of Land Management  
Yuma Field Office

Yuma Resource Management Plan

August 2005



PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Yuma Field Office (YFO), continues the process of developing the revised Resource Management Plan (RMP) and associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the BLM administered lands. The lands within the YFO are currently being managed according to the Yuma District Resource Management Plan (1987), as amended. The RMP revision process began with the publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on March 30, 2004. The revised RMP would update the existing management decisions for the lands in the YFO, where necessary. The RMP and EIS would be in compliance with the *Federal Land Policy and Management Act* of 1976 (FLPMA), the *National Environmental Policy Act* of 1969, and other regulations and policies.

The purpose of this planning bulletin is to communicate to the public relevant progress and to continue solicitation of public involvement for a collaborative planning effort. The YFO is currently in the process of formulating preliminary alternatives for the RMP/EIS.

WHERE ARE WE?

Hundreds of people attended the alternative development workshops that were held in March and many more provided written comments following the workshops. We received over 1,300 comments during the public comment period that ran through April 11, 2005. These comments were considered as we developed the preliminary draft alternatives. We are currently looking at four alternatives, which are described below.

Formulation of alternatives is based on the issues identified during scoping and the analysis of management situation which addressed the existing resource conditions and resource uses, current management directions, management opportunities, and specific mandates and authority. The completed analysis of management situation is the basis for developing the Affected Environment section and the “No Action” alternative.

Planificacion Boletin  
Plan De la Gerencia De Recurso De Yuma

En Español

La oficina de la gerencia de la tierra, Oficina Del Campo De Yuma maneja 1.2 millones de acres de tierra pública sobre todo dentro de Arizona del suroeste. BLM está revisando un plan de la gerencia de recurso para tratar las acciones futuras de la gerencia relacionadas con la recreación, los pescados y fauna, y las designaciones especiales del área.

Si usted necesita más información sobre este proceso, llame por favor a Ron Morfin al 928-317-3200.

BLM is developing a reasonable range of alternatives, with combinations of resource uses and management strategies, designed to address the identified issues and comply with all laws, regulations, and policies. One alternative is the “No Action” alternative. The “No Action” alternative maintains the status quo for resource uses, protection, and restoration. The “No Action” alternative does not translate to “no use” of the lands and resources. The formulation of alternatives process identifies the desired outcomes (goals and objectives), allowable uses (including restricted or prohibited), and management actions anticipated to achieve desired outcomes for the planning area.

WHAT ALTERNATIVES ARE WE CONSIDERING?

**Alternative A (No Action):** Describes the continuation of the present management of the YFO planning area. Alternative A provides an opportunity to compare the current management with various strategies suggested to be analyzed for future management (Alternatives B, C, and D). Alternative A serves as a baseline for most resources and land use allocations.

**Alternative B (Consumer):** Generally places an emphasis on appropriate human use and influences and the widest array of uses. It identifies areas most appropriate for various public uses and emphasizes those uses, including recreation, mineral, and energy development. It includes the greatest number of miles of open roads and trails. It places a greater emphasis on developed and motorized recreation opportunities and less on remote settings and primitive recreation.

**Alternative C (Mixed Use):** Provides visitors with opportunities to experience natural and cultural resource values of the YFO planning area. It allows visitation and development within the planning area while ensuring resource protection is not compromised. It is generally managed with decisions that have a greater balance of multiple uses. It proposes a combination of natural processes and active management techniques for resource and use management, and it provides access through a transportation network.

**Alternative D (Environmental Protection):** Generally places emphasis on preservation of the planning area’s natural and cultural resources through limited public use and discontinuation of grazing use. It focuses on natural processes and other unobtrusive methods for natural resource use and management. It proposes the fewest miles of open roads and trails; increased opportunities for dispersed, non-motorized recreation; and fewer motorized and developed recreation opportunities.

## MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

**Wilderness/Wilderness Characteristics/Visual Resource Management:** Within Arizona there are approximately 164,075 acres of existing wilderness in the YFO. The RMP will not address adding wilderness areas, reducing or eliminating existing wilderness areas, changing existing wilderness boundaries, or allowing motor vehicle or other use of mechanical transportation in any wilderness area not already authorized.

BLM has authority under FLPMA Section 201 to inventory public land resources and other values, including characteristics associated with the concept of wilderness. These characteristics are identified as naturalness, solitude, and primitive, unconfined recreation. Wilderness characteristics may be considered in land use planning when the BLM determines that those characteristics are reasonably present, of sufficient value (condition, uniqueness, relevance, importance) and need (trend, risk), and are practical to manage. BLM may allocate areas within the planning boundaries of this RMP to prescribe goals, objectives, and management actions that would maintain wilderness characteristics. BLM has evaluated citizen group proposals to identify lands with wilderness characteristics, and where valid, along with any additional lands that BLM recognizes as having wilderness characteristics, those lands are considered in this RMP. The Arizona Game and Fish Department’s (AGFD) use of motorized and mechanized equipment off designated routes is considered an administrative use and would be allowed in suitable locations (as agreed to by BLM and AGFD) for such purposes as the following: water supplementation; collar retrieval; capture and release of wildlife; and maintenance, repair, and building or rebuilding of wildlife waters.

The Visual Resource Management (VRM) system provides a way to identify, evaluate, and determine the appropriate levels of management of scenic values in the Yuma planning area.

The inventory of visual values has been documented for the RMP and is represented under all alternatives. The alternatives in the RMP would set VRM classes ranging from Class I to IV (ranging from preserving the existing character of the landscape to providing for management activities that require major modification of the existing character of the landscape).

**Transportation and Public Access:** Alternative development for transportation and public access in the RMP focuses on the requirement that BLM allocate “open,” “closed,” and “limited” areas for off-highway vehicle (OHV) use which recognizes other resource use allocations in the YFO. Current BLM planning limits OHV use to existing and/or designated routes. The route designation process (specific routes) would take place within five years of the date of acceptance of this RMP.

**Recreation:** Land use allocations for recreation include Special Recreation Management Area(s) (SRMA). These are areas where BLM focuses specific management, funding, and planning to attain the desired outcomes identified for the particular (targeted) market while protecting, sustaining, and enhancing the environmental resources of these areas. Specific management direction in a SRMA is devised to provide public enjoyment, resource protection, and public health and safety. For each SRMA identified, BLM delineates one or more discrete Recreation Management Zone(s) (RMZ). For each RMZ, BLM identifies a distinct recreation niche, outcomes (activities, experiences, and benefits), setting character conditions, and an activity planning framework. BLM also manages recreation in the remaining areas outside of SRMAs; these areas are known as the Extensive Recreation Management Area(s) (ERMA). ERMAs are intentionally managed for custodial purposes, including user and resource conflicts as well as public health and safety.

**Special Area Designations:** Special Area Designations include wilderness, National Historic Trails, National Recreation Trails, Back Country Byways, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), and other BLM administrative designations. ACECs are designated to protect and conserve ecosystems in need of “special management attention.” In addition, BLM can assess all eligible river segments and determine which are suitable or non-suitable per Section 5(d)(i) of the *Wild and Scenic Rivers Act* and make a recommendation (if applicable) to Congress for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rver System.

**Land Tenure:** *Acquisition* - BLM acquires land through purchase, exchange, donation, or eminent domain. Lands to be acquired must either facilitate access to public lands and resources, maintain or enhance public uses, facilitate implementation of the RMP, or provide for a more manageable land ownership pattern.

BLM considers land acquisitions to meet the following criteria:

- Consolidate Federal ownership
- Wildlife habitat
- Inholdings within Special Area Designations
- Acquire legal access
- Eliminate split estate by acquiring either surface or subsurface rights

**Disposal** - The FLPMA states that “the public lands be retained in Federal ownership, unless as a result of the land use planning procedure provided for in this Act, it is determined that disposal of a particular parcel will serve the national interest.” BLM land can be transferred to non-federal ownerships if it meets certain disposal criteria which are: a) the land is no longer required for a specific purpose; b) disposal would serve an important public objective; or c) the land is difficult and uneconomical to manage and is not suitable for management by another Federal department or agency. Disposal land acreage would vary among the proposed alternatives.

**Rights-of-Way** - User-initiated applications generate most of the present rights-of-way activity. Inquiries and proposals are received from Federal, state, and local governments; private individuals; and companies interested in acquiring access across or locating facilities on public land. The BLM would evaluate these applications for location within approved rights-of-way corridors.

**Communication Sites** - There are 10 existing communication sites in the YFO planning area. Communication sites are generally limited by the YFO to designated mountain peaks with existing facilities. Emphasis would be placed on converting existing single facility sites into more efficient, multi-facility sites.

**Renewable Energy** - BLM’s general policy is to facilitate environmentally responsible commercial development of renewable energy, including solar, wind, and geothermal energy. Applications for commercial solar and wind energy facilities are processed as right-of-way authorizations. Geothermal resources are developed under Federal leasing laws and regulations.

**Minerals Development:** BLM classifies mineral resources as follows: Leasable minerals – include fluid minerals such as oil, gas, coalbed methane, carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), and geothermal resources, and solid minerals such as coal, sodium, and potash; Locatable minerals – include metallic minerals such as gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, and uranium, and nonmetallic minerals such as allunite, asbestos, barite, gypsum, and mica; and Salable minerals – include construction materials such as sand, gravel, cinders, decorative rock, and building stone.

BLM supports mineral exploration and development on public lands in keeping with BLM’s multiple use mandate. Unless otherwise restricted, all federal mineral estates administered by BLM within YFO would be available for orderly and efficient development of mineral resources.

**Fish and Wildlife and Special Status Species:** The 1987 Yuma District RMP designated priority wildlife habitat as riparian areas along the Colorado River, Gila River, and selected desert bighorn sheep lambing areas. The new RMP proposes to incorporate six wildlife habitat management areas located within and outside the YFO planning area. The proposed wildlife habitat management areas are (1) Colorado and Gila River Riparian Areas, (2) Palomas Plain, (3) Desert Mountains, (4) Dunes, (5) Wildlife Movement Corridors, and (6) Natural Wildlife Waters. The desired conditions and allowable uses and management actions anticipated to achieve the desired conditions would vary among the proposed alternatives. The planning area currently has Betty’s Kitchen and Bonnie’s Kitchen as watchable wildlife areas. YFO proposes to add Gilmore’s Camp (on the Colorado River) as a watchable wildlife area. BLM would continue to work with the state fish and wildlife agencies, pursuant to the *Sikes Act* of 1974, to plan, develop, maintain, and coordinate programs for the conservation and rehabilitation of wildlife and fish (especially priority species) on public lands.

Special status species for YFO land use planning fall under the following five categories: (1) Federally Listed Threatened or Endangered Species and Designated Critical Habitat; (2) Federally Proposed Species and Proposed Critical Habitat; (3) Candidate Species; (4) State of Arizona Species of Special Concern and State of California Listed Species; and (5) BLM Sensitive Species. BLM policy is to conserve threatened or endangered species and the habitats upon which they depend, to ensure all actions authorized, funded, or carried out by BLM are in compliance with the *Endangered Species Act*, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). BLM will manage proposed, candidate, and state-listed species in accordance with the USFWS and States management directions and conservation strategies. The USFWS and state fish and wildlife agencies would be collaboratively involved in the identification of species conservation and habitat protection and restoration.

## WHAT’S NEXT?

A range of reasonable alternatives, including a no action alternative, as required by the *National Environmental Policy Act*, would be developed and analyzed in the EIS. BLM plans to issue the Draft RMP/Draft EIS in spring 2006.

BLM plans to host future meetings in spring 2006 to allow the public the opportunity to comment on the Draft RMP/Draft EIS. Meetings will be conducted in Yuma, Quartzsite, and Roll, Arizona, and Blythe, California. BLM will announce the dates for the meetings as they are determined. If you would like to be notified when these meetings have been scheduled, please use the contact information on the back of this bulletin to have your name added to our mailing list.